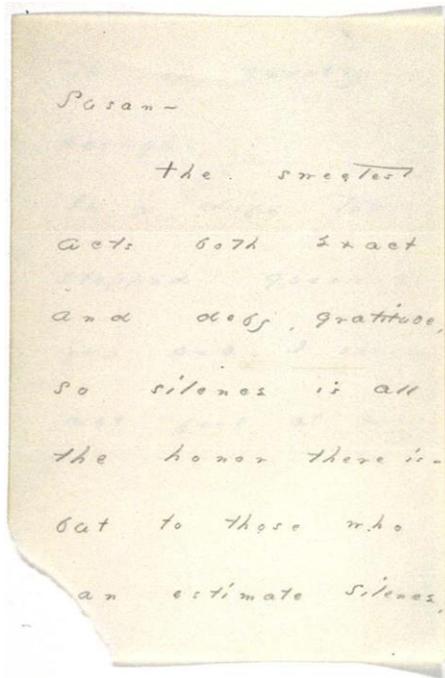


Wild Nights With Emily

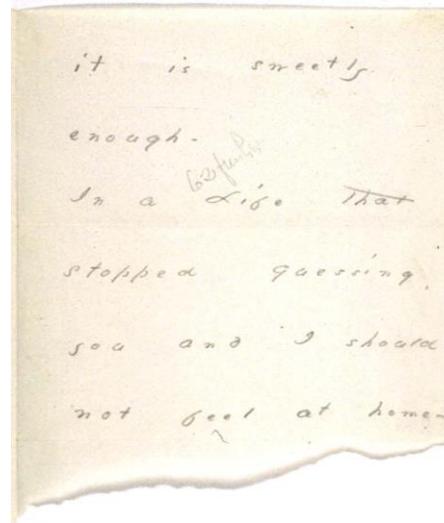
Winner of the 2015 Guggenheim Award

The History Behind the Screenplay Supplemental Press Kit Materials



Susan

*The sweetest
acts both exact
and defy, gratitude,
so silence is all
the honor there is -
but to those who
[c]an estimate silence,*



*it is sweetly
enough -
["62" and indecipherable word scribbled by Susan]
In a Life that
stopped guessing,
you and I should
not feel at home
[lower third of 2nd leaf is here torn away]*

Screenings presented by The Emily Dickinson Museum on the lawn of the Homestead (Emily Dickinson's actual home), (co-presented by the Amherst English Department for the Amherst Poetry festival); co-presented by the English Departments at Harvard and Brown University for students; by The Emily Dickinson International Society (EDIS) in Amherst, Mass; and the film was presented as the EDIS' official "paper," at the Society for the Study of American Women Writers (SSAWW) literature conference in Denver, 2018.

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ART MOVIE**
By RJ Smith

The New York Times Magazine

NOVEMBER 29, 1998 / SECTION 6



When technology allows historians to pry into the lives of the past, what does it sly about the present? By Philip Weiss

Beethoven's Hair Tells All!

By PHILIP WEISS NOV. 29, 1998

"In the introduction to her book "Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson," Martha Nell Smith, an English professor at the University of Maryland, reprints a photograph of a path worn in the grass between the adjoining Amherst estates of the Homestead and the Evergreens. Emily Dickinson lived in the Homestead; her brother, Austin, lived in the Evergreens with his wife, Susan Huntington Dickinson. It is Smith's argument that the 40-year relationship between Emily and Susan was of a committed lesbian character; that they lived together, if not in the same house, then side by side. Smith continues this argument most forcefully in her new book, which she and her co-editor, Ellen Louise Hart, title with a line from the outside of one of the many folded letters Emily sent along that path to Sue: "Open Me Carefully."

I visited Smith in her small brick house in Takoma Park, a middle-class neighborhood that offers a remarkable contrast to the highly privileged surroundings and arrangements that she is studying. There, Smith lives with her partner, Marilee Lindemann, a Willa Cather scholar, and works to bring to a wide audience news of a loving relationship between literary women.

The evidence assembled by Smith and Hart of Emily Dickinson's abiding love for Susan is considerable, but the exact character of that love is not easily established. The two women were two of the most private Americans in history -- a privacy assisted, Smith argues, by several generations of scholars who were bent on ignoring, slighting or censoring the relationship. Smith is using high technology (and her detective skills) to try to undo that censorship.

Only 10 Dickinson poems are known to have been published during her lifetime (1830-1886). The rest she left in fascicles, sheaves of paper covered with her dreamy handwriting that she then sewed together. There were also hundreds of handwritten letters, a third of them to Susan. These two bodies of print were combed over by one or more of Dickinson's survivors. During this process, someone crossed out portions of Emily's work with pen and ink -- or sometimes lifted entire words off the linen page with a sharp blade.

Smith believes the culprit was Mabel Loomis Todd, Austin's lover. Todd was the first to shepherd a volume of Emily's poems into print. And yet, Smith argues, as a fiercely middle-class woman, Todd was determined to eliminate evidence of Emily's love for her own lover's wife. (Confused? The sexual menages of the upper-class Amherst set, Smith says, constitute an American Bloomsbury.)

Smith has begun to reverse Todd's edits. For example, by studying impressions on the backs of the originals in Houghton Library at Harvard and Foster Library at Amherst, Smith has determined that 11 Dickinson poems were originally dedicated to Susan. The dedications were later obliterated.

As for the letters, they are, like everything else Dickinson wrote, astonishing in their precision and otherworldliness. They also display an intensity that some might view as erotic. In one 1855 letter to Susan, Emily writes: "I love you as dearly, Susie, as when love first began, on the step at the front door, and under the Evergreens, and it breaks my heart sometimes, because I do not hear from you. I wrote you many days ago -- I wont say many weeks, because it will look sadder so, and then I cannot write -- but Susie, it troubles me. I miss you, mourn for you, and walk the Streets alone -- often at night, beside, I fall asleep in tears, for your dear face, yet not one word comes back to me from that silent West. If it is finished, tell me, and I will raise the lid to my box of Phantoms, and lay one more love in; but if it lives and beats still, still lives and beats for me, then say me so, and I will strike the strings to one more strain of happiness before I die.

This letter escaped censorship, but at least a dozen others did not. Smith is trying to uncover the obliterations by taking high-quality photographic images of the letters to the Institute for Advanced Technology in the Humanities at the University of Virginia. At the institute, technicians use infrared light to detect alterations made to documents. They also work with computer-imaging software that can identify hundreds of separate colors in a drop of ink or a pencil mark; by manipulating these tones, the technicians can often strip out obliterations, revealing the original message, or undo erasures that 19th-century eyes thought forever invisible.

Of special interest to Smith is an April 1853 letter from Emily to Austin in which seven penciled lines have been obliterated. Dickinson wrote the letter when she was 22, at what was surely a heightened emotional time for the poet. For that spring, Dickinson first became aware that Susan, with whom she had been close for several years, was being courted by Austin.

The scraped-out lines follow a confession by Dickinson of "a dreadful feeling," and Smith can only imagine the passion in the censored passage. "It could be about affection for Susan, it might be about the way Susan looks, as another letter is, maybe even about kissing her," she said. "It might be a witness to the passion she had for Susan. It might be angry. I will report whatever I find. I will not try to hide anything. That has been a major problem in Dickinson scholarship."

Others are visiting the institute for similar purposes. Cecil Y. Lang, an emeritus professor of English at the University of Virginia, is trying to uncover mutilations in the texts of Matthew Arnold letters that may speak to a mystery about the Victorian poet and scholar: just how intense was his relationship with his older sister, Jane? Certainly her marriage in 1848 to a woolen-goods manufacturer caused deep pain to Arnold, evidenced by a letter that his literary heirs heavily censored.

Lang sees his high-tech investigations as mundane: "This would be nothing to the F.B.I. -- they do it all the time." In his writings he has hinted that Arnold had erotic feelings for his sister. But was their relationship sexual? "I do think he was in love with his sister," he said. "I don't at all think that they had sexual relations."

Even so, the revelation that Arnold had an amorous attachment to his sister, Lang says, would further the understanding of the poet's work. "Arnold's poetry is sad," he said flatly. "Why is it sad? It's not quite elegiac, but it's all sad. And there's got to be a reason for it. As far as we know from the letters, he was not a sad man. He loved his children, loved his wife. You don't see the sadness in those relationships."

Smith's aims with Dickinson are more ambitious and controversial than Lang's with Arnold. A good-natured woman of 45, seasoned by her Texas girlhood and her years in the gender wars, she says that Emily has been profoundly misrepresented, factually and interpretively, as a cracked recluse rather than as an upper-class woman romantically and artistically involved with another woman.

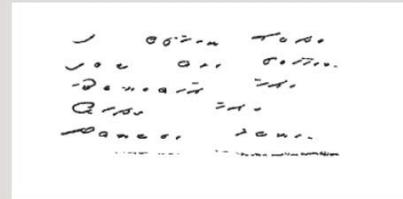
Smith is not the first feminist to seize on the Susan correspondence, but her purpose and grandeur are reminiscent of Fawn Brodie, the Jefferson scholar who challenged an edifice of Jefferson scholarship in the 1970's on the issue of Sally Hemings. Smith is confident that one day her view will prevail -- especially if she finds fresh evidence beneath the obliterations.

I told Smith what the literary scholar Harold Bloom had told me about the matter. "I accept what Richard Sewall said in his biography, that Miss Dickinson had three crucial love affairs with men," he said. Bloom ascribed the interest in Susan to a queer-studies agenda. "You're dealing with the most extraordinarily intelligent poet," he went on. "I don't think Emily ever wrote a sincere letter in her life. Her letters were prose poems, carefully staged and programmatic."

Smith motioned at her copy of "Open Me Carefully" on the coffee table. "Tell Bloom to read that," she said. "We have powerful witness to a lesbian passion."



Did Emily Dickinson have a secret lover? Martha Nell Smith is prying into the poet's papers to find out.



An Emily Dickinson Letter

And though Smith dismisses talk of queer studies, saying she had never heard the words when she began her work, she has a keen interest in gay biography. "I observed what happened this fall after the murder of Matthew Shepard," she said. "How it affected gay students -- young and fragile egos, some out, some not out -- and one important way to bolster their self-esteem is to recover gay and lesbian relationships throughout history. They should know that humans have loved each other in a variety of ways for a very long time. It hasn't just been Adam and Eve."

David Porter, a retired English professor at the University of Massachusetts, considers Smith's detective work "perfectly legitimate." Still, the sexual issue seems to make him uncomfortable.

"When you reduce Emily Dickinson to her social behavior, a kind of easily graspable proclivity, then you have missed, good heavens, what literary art is all about," Porter said. "The extraordinary thing about Emily Dickinson is that she was so careful throughout her life not to express for any large group of readers what her personal life was."

I said to Smith: "I know I have a dirty mind. But did they go to bed, and do you care?"

"I have a dirty mind, too," Smith said with a laugh. "I am interested in sexual matters, but I am sort of of two minds. I don't think it's my business if Emily and Susan had a physical relationship. On the other hand, I'm interested in what they did, and I think it's important to our understanding of her work and life."

But what would Dickinson think? Has Smith violated her privacy?

"I think she would be amused to think people cared whom she loved," the scholar said. "She wanted to liberate people's sensibility, and in this day and age I don't think she would mind its being known."

And Susan Dickinson?

"She might not want us to talk about what we imagine takes place in the bedroom, but I do think she would be pleased about our putting this love out there."

I thought Smith was wrong: Susan Dickinson struck me as a freethinking but proper New England aristocrat. Even in our liberated age, I couldn't imagine her applauding a sexual inquiry, let alone a book called "Open Me Carefully." But that was a false issue. Smith was a scholar, breaking historical news; even if she believed her subjects would have opposed her, she was going to do her work.

"Now that Ted Hughes is dead, doesn't that make Sylvia Plath more dead?" she observed before I left."

Letters and Poems From Emily Dickinson to Susan Dickinson

1) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/mutilation/ta651.html>

“Her breast is fit for pearls, But I was not a ‘Diver...’”

2) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl2.htm>

“...If you were here, and Oh that you were, my Susie, we need not talk at all, our eyes would whisper for us, and your hand fast in mine, we would not ask for language - ...Now farewell, Susie, and Vinnie sends her love, and mother her's, and I add a kiss, shyly, lest there is somebody there!! Dont let them see, will you Susie? Emilie -”

3) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl7.htm>

“Susie, will you indeed come home next Saturday, and be my own again, and kiss me as you used to?... I hope for you so much, and feel so eager for you, feel that I cannot wait, feel that now I must have you - that the expectation once more to see your face again, makes me feel hot and feverish, and my heart beats so fast - I go to sleep at night, and the first thing I know, I am sitting there wide awake, and clasping my hands tightly, and thinking of next Saturday...”

4) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb63.htm>

“Susan - I would have come out of Eden to open the Door for you if I had known you were there You must knock with a Trumpet as Gabriel does, whose Hands are small as yours - I knew he knocked and went away - I did'nt dream that you did -
Emily

5) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl18.htm>

“So sweet and still, and Thee, Oh Susie, what need I more, to make my heaven whole? Sweet Hour, blessed Hour, to carry me to you, and to bring you back to me, long enough to snatch one kiss, and whisper Good bye, again. I have thought of it all day, Susie, and I fear of but little else, and when I was gone to meeting it filled my mind so full, I could not find a chink to put the worthy pastor; when he said "Our Heavenly Father," I said "Oh Darling Sue"; when he read the 100th Psalm, I kept saying your precious letter all over to myself, and Susie, when they sang - it would have made

you laugh to hear one little voice, piping to the departed. I made up words and kept singing how I loved you, and you had gone, while all the rest of the choir were singing Hallelujahs. I presume nobody heard me, because I sang so small, but it was a kind of a comfort to think I might put them out, singing of you. I a'nt there this afternoon, tho', because I am here, writing a little letter to my dear Sue, and I am very happy. I think of ten weeks - Dear One, and I think of love, and you, and my heart grows full and warm, and my breath stands still. The sun does'nt shine at all, but I can feel a sunshine stealing into my soul... You have been happy, Susie, and now are sad - and the whole world seems lone; but it wont be so always, "some days must be dark and dreary"! You wont cry any more, will you, Susie, for my father will be your father, and my home will be your home, and where you go, I will go, and we will lie side by side in the kirkyard.”

6) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb11.htm>

Susan knows
she is a Siren -
and that at a
word from her,
Emily would
forfeit Righteousness -
Please excuse
the grossness
of this Morning
I was for a
moment disarmed -
This is the
World that opens
and shuts, like
the Eye of the
Wax Doll

7) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl1.htm>

I am sick today, dear Susie, and have not been to church. There has been a pleasant quiet, in which to think of you, and I have not been eno' that I cannot write to you. I love you as dearly, Susie, as when love first began, on the step at the front door, and under the Evergreens, and it breaks my heart sometimes, because I do not hear from you. I wrote you many days ago I wont say many weeks, because it will look sadder so, and then I cannot write but Susie, it troubles me. I miss you, mourn for you, and walk the Streets alone often at night, beside, I fall asleep in tears, for your dear face, yet not one word comes back to me from that silent West. If it is finished, tell me, and I will raise the lid to my box of Phantoms, and lay one more love in; but if it lives and beats still, still lives and beats for me, then say me so, and I will strike the strings to one more strain of happiness before I die. Why Susie think of it you are my precious Sister, and

8) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl2.htm>
"Susie, forgive me Darling, for every word I say - my heart is full of you, none other than you in my thoughts, yet when I seek to say to you something not for the world, words fail me; If you were here, and Oh that you were, my Susie, we need not talk at all, our eyes would whisper for us, and your hand fast in mine, we would not ask for language - I try to bring you nearer, I chase the weeks away till they are quite departed, and fancy you have come, and I am on my way through the green lane to meet you, and my heart goes scampering so, that I have much ado to bring it back again, and learn it to be patient, till that dear Susie comes."

9) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb2.htm>
Dear Sue ~
With the
Exception of
Shakespeare, you
have told me of
more knowledge
than any one living -

10) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl22.htm>
It's a sorrowful morning Susie – the wind blows and it rains; "into each life some rain must fall,"
and I hardly know which falls fastest, the rain without, or with-in - Oh Susie, I would nestle close to your warm heart, and never hear the wind blow, or the storm beat, again. Is there any room there for me, or shall I wander away all homeless and alone? Thank you for loving me, darling, and will you "love me more if ever you come home" ! it is enough, dear Susie, I know I shall be satisfied. But what can I do towards you? - dearer you cannot be, for I love you so already, that it almost breaks my heart – per-haps I can love you anew, every day of my life, every morning and evening - Oh if you will let me, how happy I shall be!
The precious billet, Susie, I am wearing the paper out, reading it over and o'er, but the dear thoughts cant wear out if they try, thanks to Our Father, Susie! Vinnie and I talked of you all last evening long, and went to sleep mourning for you, and pretty soon I waked up saying "Precious trea-sure, thou art mine," and there you were all right, my Susie, and I hardly dared to sleep lest some one steal you away. Never mind the letter, Susie; you have so much to do; just write me every week one line, and let it be, "Emily, I love you," and I will be satisfied! Your own Emily

11) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/h361.htm>
Title divine - is mine!
The Wife - without the Sign!
Acute Degree - conferred on me -
Empress of Cavalry!
Royal - all but the Crown!
Betrothed - without the swoon
God sends us Women -
When you - hold - Garnet to Garnet -
Gold - to Gold -
Born - Bridalled - Shrouded -
In a Day -
"My Husband" - women say -
Stroking the Melody -
Is this - the way?

12) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb131.htm>
Thursday noon.

Were it not for the weather Susie- my little, unwelcome face would come peering in today- I should steal a kiss from the sister the darling Rover returned Thank the wintry wind my dear one- that spares such daring intrusion! Dear Susie happy Susie- I rejoice in all your Joy sustained by that dear sister you will never again be lonely.

13) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl20.htm>
I cannot believe, dear Susie, that I have stayed without you almost a whole year long; sometimes the time seems short, and the thought of you as warm as if you had gone but yesterday, and again if years and years had trod their silent pathway, the time would seem less long.

And now how soon I shall have you, shall hold you in my arms; you will forgive the tears, Susie, they are so glad to come that it is not in my heart to reprove them and send them home. I dont know why it is - but there's something in your name, now you are taken from me, which fills my heart so full, and my eye, too. It is not that the mention grieves me, no, Susie, but I think of each "sunnyside" where we have sat together, and lest there be no more, I guess is what makes the tears come. Mattie was here last evening, and we sat on the front door stone, and talked about life and love, and whispered our childish fancies about such blissful things - the evening was gone so soon, and I walked home with Mattie beneath the silent moon, and wished for you, and Heaven. You did not come, Darling, but a bit of Heaven did, or so it seemed to us, as we walked side by side and wondered of that great blessedness which may be our's sometime, is granted now, to some. This union, my dear Susie, by which two lives are one, this sweet and strange adoption wherein we can but look, and are not yet admitted, how it can fill the

heart, and make it gang wildly beating, how it will take us one day, and make us all it's own, and we shall not run away from it, but lie still and be happy!

You and I have been strangely silent upon this subject, Susie, we have often touched upon it, and as quickly fled away, as children shut their eyes when the sun is too bright for them. I have always hoped to know if you had no dear fancy, illumining all your life, no one of whom you murmured in the faithful ear of night - and I hav'nt seen Root this term, I guess Mattie and I, are not sufficient for him!

14) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb4.htm>

To own a
Susan of
my own
Is of itself
a Bliss -
Whatever
Realm I
forfeit, Lord,
Continue
me in this!
Emily

15) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl13.htm>

Will you be kind to me, Susie? I am naughty and cross, this morning, and nobody loves me here; nor would you love me, if you should see me frown, and hear how loud the door bangs whenever I go through; and yet it is'nt anger - I dont believe it is, for when nobody sees, I brush away big tears with the corner of my apron, and then go working on - bitter tears, Susie - so hot that they burn my cheeks, and almost scorch my eyeballs, but you have wept such, and you know they are less of anger than sorrow.

And I do love to run fast - and hide away from them all; here in dear Susie's bosom, I know is love and rest, and I never would go away, did not the big world call me, and beat me for not working.

16) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb76.htm>

Only Woman
in the World ,
Accept a
Julep `

17) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl8.htm>

I know dear Susie is busy, or she would not forget her lone little Emilie, who wrote her just as soon as she'd gone to Manchester, and has waited so patiently till she can wait no more, and the credulous little heart, fond even tho' forsaken, will get it's big black inkstand, and tell her once again how well it loves her.

18) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb55.htm>

Susan

The sweetest
acts both exact
and defy, gratitude,
so silence is all
the honor there is -
but to those who
[c]an estimate silence,
it is sweetly
enough -
In a Life that
stopped guessing,
you and I should
not feel at home

19) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl10.htm>

Will you let me come dear Susie - looking just as I do, my dress soiled and worn, my grand old apron, and my hair- Oh Susie, time would fail me to enumerate my appearance, yet I love you just as dearly as if I was e'er so fine, so you wont care, will you? I am so glad dear Susie- that our hearts are always clean, and always neat and lovely, so not to be ashamed. I have been hard at work this morning, and I ought to be working now- but I cannot deny myself the luxury of a minute or two with you.

20) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/h262.htm>

He fumbles at your Soul
As Players at the Keys
Before they drop full
Music on -
He stuns you by degrees -
Prepares your brittle Nature
For the Ethereal Blow
By fainter Hammers -
further heard -
Then nearer - Then so slow
Your Breath has time to
straighten -
Your Brain - to bubble Cool -
Deals - One - imperial -
Thunderbolt -
That scalps your
naked Soul -

When Winds take Forests
in their Paws -
The Universe - is still -
Emily.

21) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb31.htm>

Thank Sue, but
not tonight.
Further Nights.

Emily.

22) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb56.htm>

Sweet Sue,
There is
no first, or last,
in Forever -
It is Centre, there,
all the time -
To believe - is enough,
and the right of
supposing -
Take back that
"Bee" and "Buttercup"
I have no Field
for them, though
for the Woman
whom I prefer,
Here is Festival -
Where my Hands
are cut, Her
fingers will be
found inside -
Our beautiful Neighbor
"moved" in May -
It leaves an
Unimportance.
Take the Key to
the Lily, now, and
I will lock the Rose

23) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb41.htm>

Dear Sue -
I could
send you no
Note so sweet
as the last
words of
your Boy -
"You will look
after Mother"?
Emily '

24) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb51.htm>

To be Susan
is Imagination,
To have been
Susan, a Dream -
What depths
of Domingo
in that torrid
Spirit!
Emily '

25) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb184.htm>

To miss you, Sue,
is power.
The stimulus
of Loss makes
most Possession
mean.
To live lasts
always, but to
love is firmer
than to live.
No Heart that
broke but further
went than
Immortality.

26) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb139.htm>

I could not drink
it, Sue,
Till you had tasted
first -
Though cooler than
the Water - was
The Thoughtfulness of
Thirst,
Emily.

27) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/letter/thb90.htm>

Morning
might come
by Accident -
Sister -
Night comes
by Event -
To believe the
final line of
the Card would
foreclose Faith -
Faith is Doubt.
Sister -
Show me
Eternity , and
I will show
you Memory -
Both in one
package lain
And lifted
back again -
Be Sue, while
I am Emily -
Be next, what
you have ever
been, Infinity -

28) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hl6.htm>
Susie it is a little thing to say how lone it is anyone can do it, but to wear the lonesomeness next your heart for weeks, when you sleep, and when you wake, ever missing something, this, all cannot say, and it baffles me.

I could paint a portrait which would bring the tears, had I canvass for it, and the scene should be solitude, and the figures solitude and the lights and shades, each a solitude.

I could fill a chamber with landscapes so lone, men should pause and weep there; then haste grateful home, for a loved one left. Today has been a fair day, very still and blue. Tonight, the crimson children are playing in the West, and tomorrow will be colder...

In all I number you. I want to think of you each hour in the day. What you are saying doing I want to walk with you, as seeing yet unseen. You say you walk and sew alone. I walk and sew alone. I don't see much of Vinnie she's mostly dusting stairs!

29) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb173.htm>
Our last words were of you, and as we said Dear Susie, the sunshine grew so warm, and out peeped prisoned leaves, and the Robins answered Susie, and the big hills left their work, and echo-ed Susie, and from the smiling fields, and from the fragrant meadows came troops of fairy Susies, and asked "Is it me"? No, Little One, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor can the heart conceive" my Susie, whom I love. These days of heaven bring you nearer and nearer, and every bird that sings, and every bud that blooms, does but remind me more of that garden unseen, awaiting the hand that tills it. Dear Susie, when you come, how many boundless blossoms among those silent beds! How I do count the days - how I do long for the time when I may count the hours without incurring the charge of Femina insania! I made up the Latin - Susie, for I could not think how it went, according to Stoddard and Andrew! I want to send you joy, I have half a mind to put up one of these dear little Robin's, and send him singing to you. I know I would, Susie, did I think he would live to get there and sing his little songs. I shall keep everything singing tho', until Dear Child gets home - and I shan't let anything blossom till then - either. I have got to go out in the garden now, and whip a Crown-Imperial for presuming to hold its head up, until you have come home, so farewell, Susie - I shall think of you at sun-set, and at sunrise, again; and at noon, and forenoon, and afternoon, and always, and evermore, till this little heart stops beating and is still. Emilie

30) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb13.htm>
My Maker let
me be
Enamored most
of thee But
nearer this I
more should
miss

31) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hsh1.htm>
(Letter/poem from Emily to Sue)
I spilt the dew but took the morn,
I chose this single Star From out
the wide night's numbers, Sue-
forevermore!
-Emilie.

32) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb162.htm>
(Letter/poem from Emily to Sue) You
must let me
go first, Sue, because I live in the Sea always and know
the
Road-

I would have drowned twice to save
you sinking, dear,
If I could only have
covered your
Eyes so you wouldn't have seen the Water-

33) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb122.htm>
Sue makes
sick Days
so sweet, we
almost hate
our health.
Emily -

34) <http://archive.emilydickinson.org/working/hb1.htm>
(From Emily to Sue, entire letter)

Are you sure
we are making
the most of it?
Emily

[The above represents 8% of the 412 known letters from Emily to Susan]

A NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CHARACTER OF KATE SCOTT ANTHON, AND THE “WILD NIGHTS WITH EMILY” FEATURE FILM



In the late 1940's, the scholar Rebecca Patterson began to research Emily Dickinson's letters to Kate Scott Anthon, and Kate's descendants were enthusiastic that their relative would be written about in conjunction with the world-famous poet. However, once the scholar shared what she had discovered in the correspondence--that it revealed a romantic entanglement between the two women-- the family withdrew their permission to use the letters, taking them back and burning them. Patterson still had enough material from her notes to write a book, but her work was largely discredited and targeted by lawsuits (this all took place years before Stonewall and the gay rights movement). And the book went out of print for many years.

Recently, a daguerreotype portrait surfaced of two women, one bearing a startling resemblance to Emily Dickinson, with her arm around Kate Scott. This cast new light on Emily's relationship with Kate, as Emily was notorious for refusing to have her daguerreotype taken. Indeed, the timing of events indicate that Kate Scott may have been the mysterious figure known as "Master" --whom Emily addressed three steamy drafts of letters to-- and whose identity has been speculated on at length by scholars.

Through careful attention to letters and poems Emily wrote in this period, and the dates of her four visits from Kate, Patterson was able to document that something happened between Kate and Emily on one occasion in Emily's bedroom. Emily fell hard; Kate was definitely interested, but not as smitten. Kate then left to return to her home in Cooperstown, NY, and she and Emily wrote each other with great frequency. At a certain point, Kate stopped answering Emily's correspondence, in a modern version of "ghosting." Much time then passed, until Kate finally used the excuse of the start of the Civil War to write Emily her "Dear John" letter.

Kate had met Emily through Susan Dickinson, Emily's sister-in-law. In fact Kate and Susan had their own entanglement during their school days, when Kate introduced herself to Susan, whom she didn't know, by throwing her arms around her and kissing her passionately on the lips. Kate and Susan remained close for many years, and this put Susan in an awkward position with both Kate and Emily, as the affair was both unacknowledged and plain as day from Emily's behavior. Emily and Susan themselves had a life-long romantic relationship-- which is the focus of "Wild Nights.." -- and this interlude between Emily and Kate took place when Emily felt shut-out by Susan, after birth of Susan's first child.

During the Civil War, Kate continued to frequently visit Amherst, and Susan's house-- which was right next to Emily's-- always with some new intimate female friend in tow. These visits were unbearably painful for Emily, and yet Kate insisted on returning time after time. Eventually, Emily refused to go next door to see her. Although there is an indication that Kate suffered somewhat -- she was not without feeling for Emily-- by keeping Emily in suspense for many months as to what was happening she compounded Emily's pain. Emily wrote at the time, "The whole of it came not at once, T'was murder by degrees" and "Knows how to forget! But could she teach it?"

Kate would go on to marry John Anthon--after an engagement that Kate prolonged by leaving for Paris without him, where she spent more money on dresses than she did on her lodgings.

Ultimately, after John's death, Kate ended up living in Europe, in a relationship with a young woman (they called themselves "Mr & Mrs Pump"). Kate spent time in notorious "gay circles" there, including associating with the famous openly lesbian Shakespearean actress Charlotte Cushman. Rebecca Patterson writes how we can understand the context of the same-sex passion between Kate and Emily, especially in light of Kate's later history.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

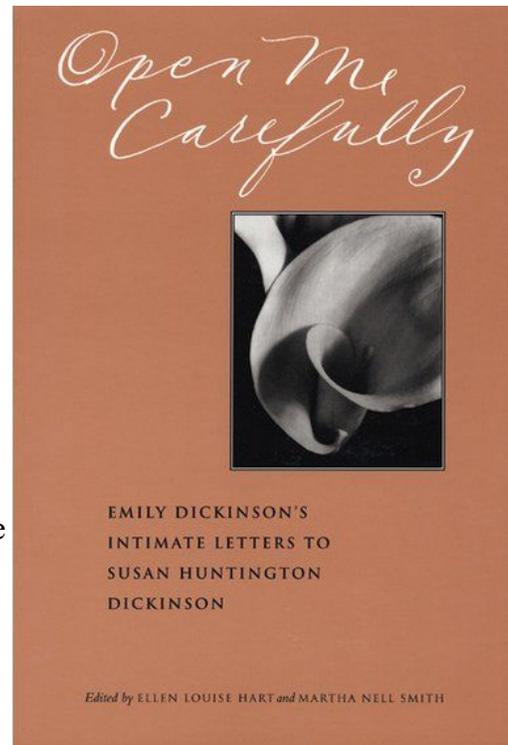
EMILY'S LIFE THROUGH KEY PUBLICATIONS

The filmmaker is often asked how she researched the story-- Emily wrote Susan so many letters and there were hundreds of Emily's letters Mabel never handled (or censored). Mabel had only handled Emily's letters to Austin *about* Susan; Emily's letters *to* Susan were just sitting out there for any scholar to read, and were PUBLISHED in 1998!

Open Me Carefully

Emily Dickinson's Intimate Letters to Susan
Huntington Dickinson
PUBLISHED 1998

- Edited by Ellen Louise Hart & Martha Nell Smith.
- Reviewed in *The New York Times* (hardly a low visibility publication).
- There were so many letters from Emily to Susan, that the publisher could not include them all in the manuscript.
- In a letter to Susan, Emily would compare their love to Dante's passionate love for Beatrice, Swift's for Stella, and Mirabeau's love for de Ruffey.*



*Sophie de Ruffey and the Count of Mirabeau wrote over six hundred letters to each other over the course of their liaison, volumes of which were famously published. Sophie, was married at the age of 17 to a marquis who was 49 years her senior. She met Mirabeau, who was also married, and the two began a passionate love affair. The couple ran away to Amsterdam, but the police caught up with them, and Mirabeau was imprisoned, while Sophie, pregnant with his child, was also sent against her will to a "house of discipline" and later held captive in a convent. Their most celebrated correspondence published in 1792 dates back to their time of captivity.

The Life of Emily Dickinson

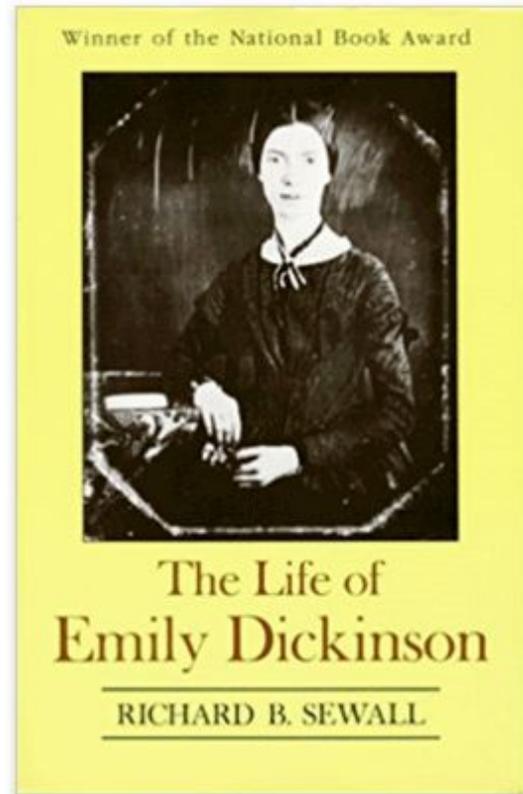
PUBLISHED 1974

Written by Richard B. Sewall, a scholar at Yale University

- Winner of the National Book Award
- Cited as recently as 2008 in *The New Yorker* as the “Critical biography” of Dickinson that is “unsurpassed.”
- Included “Scurrilous But True” Mabel’s gossipy, unpublished and unfinished memoir of her time in Amherst [Mentioned in *Wild Nights..*]

-The “camphorwood chest,” the trunk of Emily’s papers that her sister Lavinia opens in a scene in “*Wild Nights..*” had ended up in Mabel’s possession when she was working on the poem publications. Mabel refused to return the trunk to the surviving Dickinsons -- even though it included unpublished poems of Emily’s -- after they won a lawsuit against her. **“When the trial over the strip of land ended disastrously for the Todds [this was a complicated lawsuit where Lavinia sued Mabel over a tract of land deed that otherwise would have gone to Susan’s children, mentioned in a scene in *Wild Nights...*] she [Mabel] determined to have nothing more to do with things Dickinson, put all the manuscript materials, including some 665 of Emily’s poems, in the famous camphorwood chest and shut the lid, as she thought, forever.”** (Sewall, page 234)

- By holding access to “The famous camphorwood chest” -- a goldmine for any Dickinson scholar -- Millicent (Mabel’s Daughter) was able to ensure that Sewall would write the story of Emily from her mother’s skewed perspective. Sewall was even named the executor of Millicent Todd's estate. **“Her papers, indispensable to the project, came to Yale. She wanted, she said, “the whole story” of her mother’s involvement told -- but told in the setting of the larger story of Emily Dickinson.”** (Sewall; preface page xiv).



The Life of Emily Dickinson (cont.)

- “A biographer tempted by exclusive access to an archive of such eloquence is bound to be influenced;”

Sewall naively passed on the trove of Todd untruths about Emily and Susan: including the idea that Emily Dickinson had favoured Mabel (from whom Emily refused to receive a visit) over Susan, “**Even though she never saw her face to face, it could be said that Mabel Todd penetrated, ultimately, to the “real” Emily Dickinson more surely than did any of Emily’s close associates.**” (Sewall, page 215)

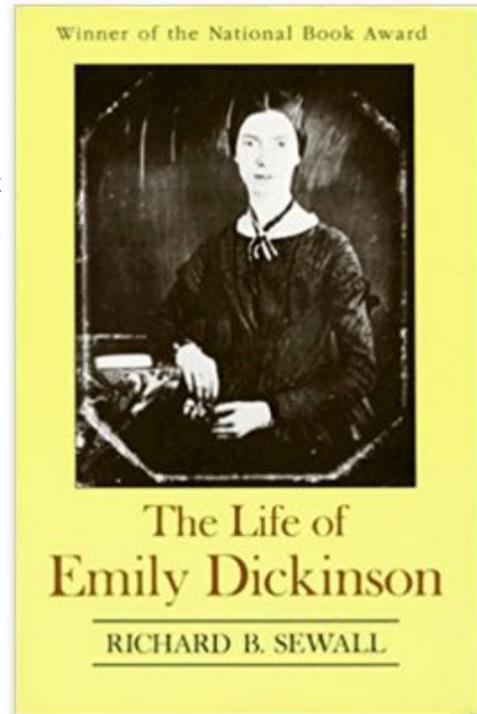
-The book established the fiction via Mabel’s opinion that Emily and Susan had only a “girlhood” friendship, and then were estranged throughout Emily’s adult life. After quoting this passionate poem to Sue: “***I split the dew - / But took the morn - / I chose this single star / From out***

the wide night’s numbers - / Sue - forevermore!” (#14, late 1858) Sewall can only make sense of it from Mabel’s perspective of the failed relationship between Emily and Sue, by declaring it has the opposite meaning: “**Is the poem a pledge of eternal loyalty - or an elegy on a youthful friendship and a bitter reminder?**” (Sewall, page 169). Emily wrote the poem when she was 28.

-In the early scholarship of Emily Dickinson, scholars were unaware that Mabel Todd was Austin’s mistress, and were unable to critically contextualize Mabel’s personal animosity towards Susan (Austin’s wife). However, Sewall *did* know, but *still* characterized Mabel’s most extreme descriptions of Sue as charitable. He wrote:

“**So it is noteworthy that in her diary (May 13, 1913) for the day after Susan died, Mabel, though still critical of Sue, was capable of some admiration and compassion [emphasis added]. At least she seems to have understood, as Emily did, the paradox and power of Sue’s nature:**

‘**Poor old Susan died last night. A very curious nature, full of (originally) fine powers most cruelly perverted [emphasis added]. She has done incalculable evil, and wrought endless unhappiness. At times she seemed possessed of a devil - yet could be smoothly winning & interesting.**’” (Sewall, page 196)



Master Letters of Emily Dickinson

PUBLISHED 1958

According to Amazon.com: “These three letters, which Emily Dickinson drafted to a man she called "Master," stand near the heart of her mystery. Although there is no evidence the letters were ever posted, they indicate a long relationship, geographically apart, in which correspondence would have been the primary means of communication. Dickinson did not write letters as a fictional genre, and these were surely part of a much larger correspondence yet unknown to us. “

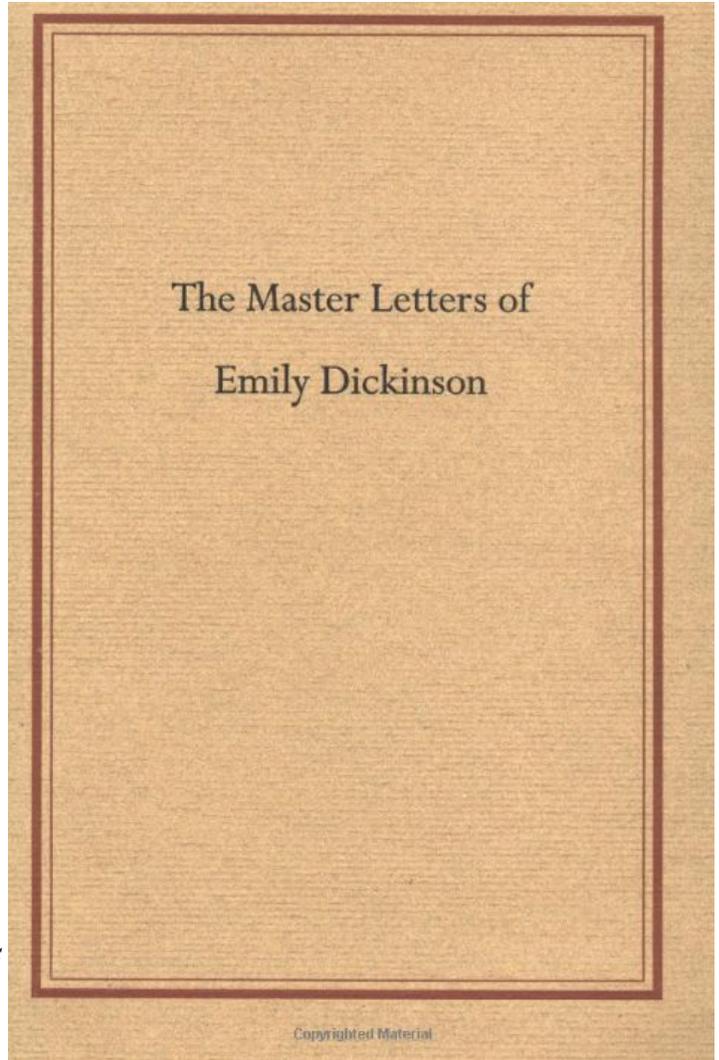
- These were three drafts found in Emily's papers.

- Mabel first published a snippet -- six brief sentences -- in her edition of Dickinson's *Letters* (1894). The identity had been concealed under the heading “To _____,” [added by

Mabel] and “a deliberately misleading date of 1885, almost at the end of Dickinson's life, had been assigned” (R.W. Franklin, pg 6, intro to *The Master Letters of Emily Dickinson*)

- Scholars speculated at length -- as intended by Mabel and Millicent -- as to who was this mysterious “Master.” While reams of scholarship was written speculating on the recipient for these three drafts of letters (that were possibly never even sent); the roughly 400 letters to Sue -- where the name Sue had not been erased or mutilated and scholars *did* know Emily's intended recipient -- were completely ignored.

- 1955 The three ‘Master Letters’ were first published by Millicent Todd Bingham in “Emily Dickinson's Home” right after the book (“The Riddle of Emily Dickinson”) about Emily's affair with Kate came out. This was also when Millicent went to Sewall about publishing a book.



“By printing a facsimile of one letter and transcriptions of the other two while mentioning Higginson, Wadsworth, Bowles, and Lord as possible candidates for "Master," she [Millicent, Mabel’s daughter] reinforced rumors about the poet's mystery lover. In fact, before Bingham’s publication of the documents in 1955, all Dickinson studies ‘were without knowledge of their existence, text, or apparent recipient’ (ML6). Too, Bingham appears enthusiastic when repeating [Mabel] Loomis Todd's story attributing a report on Emily's romance to Sue:

. . . Here are my mother's unedited words: "About this time Sue, as she was called in the village, began to tell me about a remarkable sister of Austin's who never went out, and saw no one who called. I heard of her also through others in town who seemed to resent, somewhat, her refusal to see themselves, who had known her in earlier years. Then came a note from this mysterious Emily's housemate, her sister Lavinia, demanding that I call 'at once, with my husband.' Sue said at that, 'You will not allow your husband to go there, I hope!' 'Why not?' I asked innocently. 'Because they have not, either of them, any idea of morality,' she replied, with a certain satisfaction in her tone. I knew that would interest my good husband, and pressing her a little farther, she added, 'I went in there one day, and in the drawing room I found Emily reclining in the arms of a man. What can you say to that?' I had no explanation, of course, so I let the subject drop, notwithstanding which I went to the ancestral mansion in which the two lived a few days later."

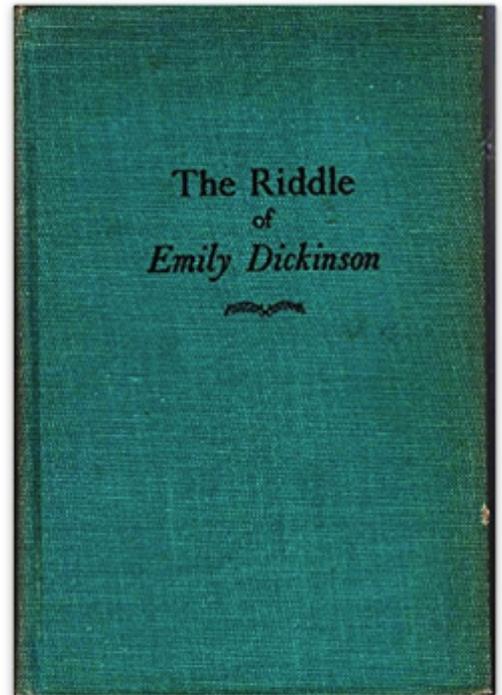
(REVELATION 59)

This is all hearsay, but understandably [Millicent Todd] Bingham does not question her mother's account, which serves both to portray a haughty, judgmental Sue and to encourage belief in a clandestine love affair of Emily's. By repeating the story without skepticism, Bingham reinforces the impression that this is reliable biographical data.” (Page 101, “Rowing in Eden: Rereading Emily Dickinson” by Martha Nell Smith)

The Riddle of Emily Dickinson

PUBLISHED 1951

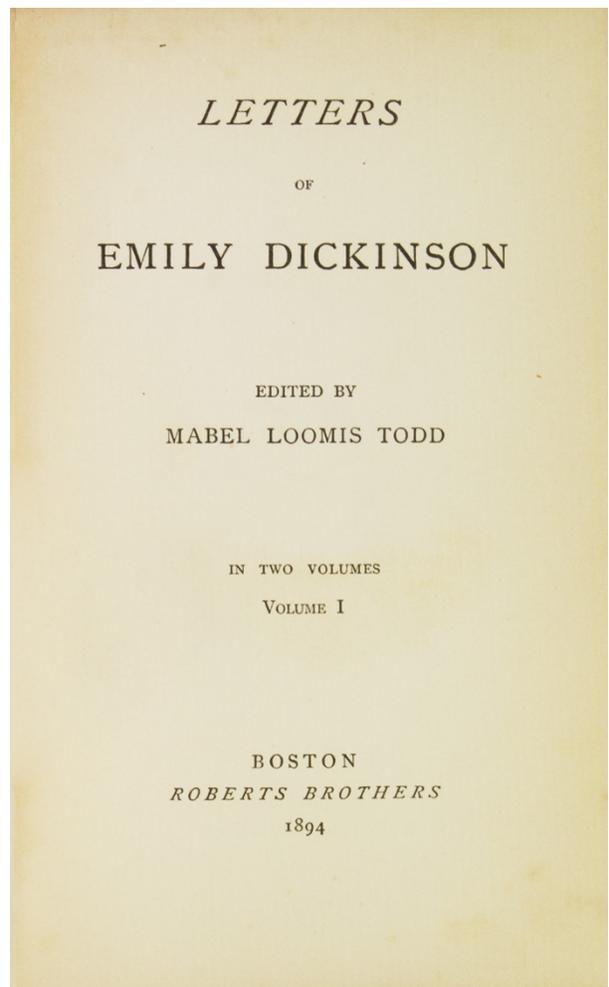
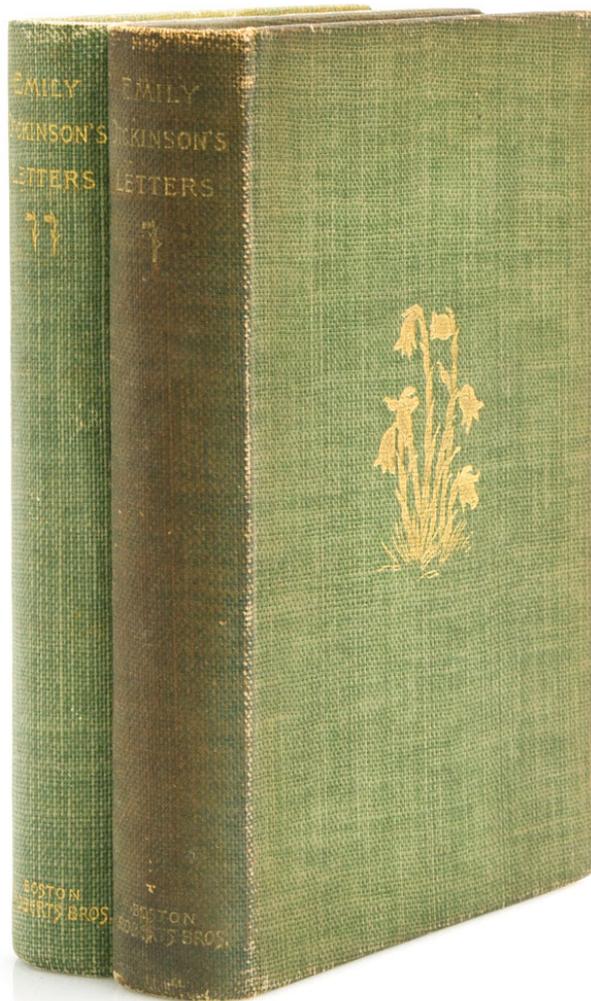
- About Emily's passionate -- if short -- love affair with Kate ("the Widow Kate").
- "No woman writes poems about a love affair between herself and an imaginary woman; this relationship is bound to be real" (Patterson, pg 129)
- At the height of the Red Scare, homosexuality was equated with communism. Such a revelation could cause Dickinson's poetry to be blacklisted in American schools, if not shunned by her readers. Mabel's daughter Millicent declares this book could destroy her mother's life's work.
- The book stated the difficulty in acknowledging the idea that Emily was involved with her sister-in-law: "This is a lovers message, and it is directed to someone in the house next door. If Sue Dickinson was the recipient, then the story becomes unpleasant." (Patterson)
- ("Wild Nights With Emily" presents that the three torrid drafts of letters later grouped as the "Master Letters" were most likely written to a woman (Kate) -- but ultimately around a kind of one-night-stand not that important in the overall scope of Emily's life.)
- Explained that other researchers misunderstood that "Emily had filial and sisterly relations with men," and biographers have confused these letters with love relationships.
- Documented how Emily-- after an initial version of a poem written as the expression of same-sex desire-- often then reassigned the gender of herself or her beloved. She would masculinized the pronouns in her love poems much later, when sending them to editors, to make them more acceptable for publication.
- The book caused a sensation, and led Millicent Todd Bingham, Mabel Todd's daughter, to go to Richard Sewall with her Mother's (Mabel Todd) papers, and to publish "The Master Letters."



Text

"I shall not murmur if at last / The ones I loved below / Permission have to understand /
For what I shunned them so — / Divulging it would rest my Heart / But it would ravage theirs -/
Why, Katie, Treason has a Voice — / But mine — dispels — in Tears."

Unsent Letter-Poem from Emily Dickinson to Kate Scott Anthon



Letters of Emily Dickinson

PUBLISHED 1894, edited by Mabel Loomis Todd.

“As she kept no journal, the letters are the more interesting because they contain all the prose which she is known to have written.” -from the introduction by Mabel.

Mabel includes no letters from Emily to Susan, despite the fact that Emily wrote more letters to Susan than all of her other correspondents combined, and Susan lived right next door.

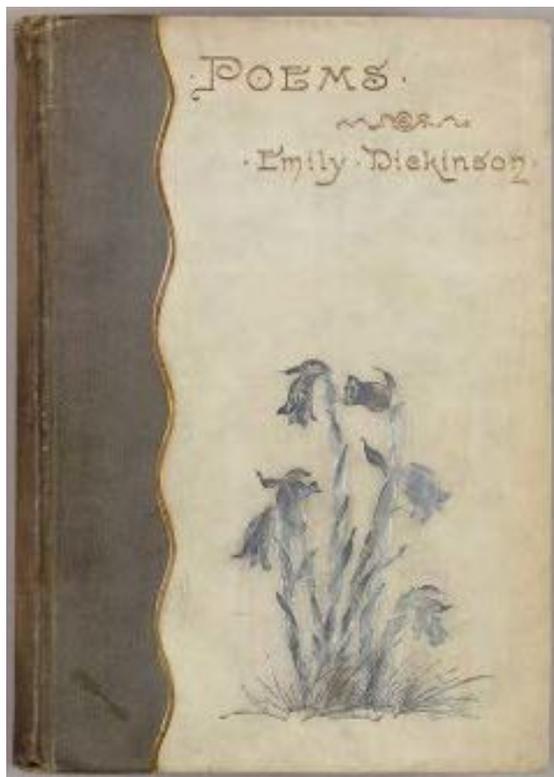
Mabel also includes a fragment of a draft of a letter and adds her own line: “To _____” at the top of the letter, causing feverish speculation as to the recipient. (This would later become what is known as one of the “master letters.”). She expunges references to Susan in the letters that Emily wrote to Austin around the time of learning of his engagement.

Poems - Emily Dickinson

First Edition of Emily Dickinson's poems

PUBLISHED 1890, FOUR YEARS AFTER EMILY'S DEATH

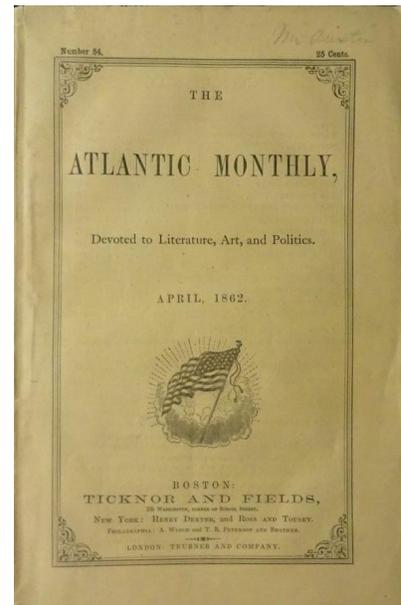
- The book was assembled and edited by Mabel Todd, while Higginson lent his name (and considerable cache) to it as co-editor, and wrote the forward.
- Despite Higginson's fame in the literary world, the manuscript was rejected many times, including by publishers Houghton-Mifflin who rejected it, saying the rhyme scheme is "too queer."
- Finally, the only option for the book was as a vanity publication: Thomas Niles of Roberts Brothers Publishers wrote Higginson that he thought it "unwise to perpetuate Miss Dickinson's poems" and they would only publish the book if Lavinia Dickinson "will pay for the [typesetting] plates," (which she did) And Roberts used "a balance of paper" they "had on hand."-- and the family had to agree that the book "shall be exempt from copyright [royalty]"
- Publication caused an immediate sensation
- To follow: "Poems, Second Series," Published in 1891 (Mabel Todd shared editing credit with Higginson); "Letters of Emily Dickinson," edited by Mabel Todd, Published in 1894; "Poems, Third Series," Published in 1896 (Todd had sole editing credit; book was poorly reviewed)



Atlantic Monthly

April 1862 Issue -

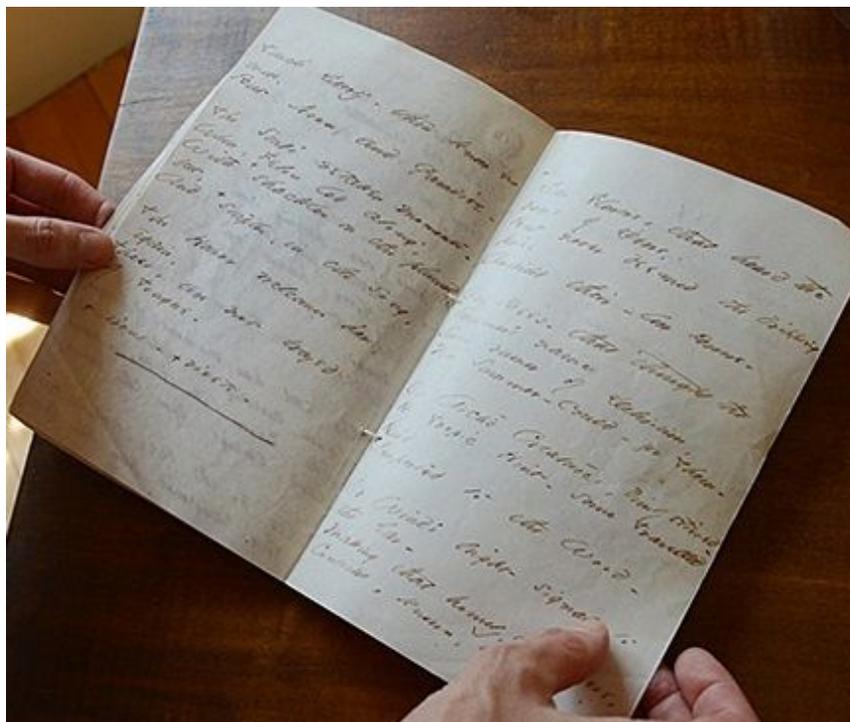
- Includes “Letter to a Young Contributor” -- Higginson’s advice for writers who wish to submit to the Atlantic Monthly.
- Emily wrote to him with extraordinary directness: “Mr. Higginson, Are you too deeply occupied to say if my Verse is alive?”
- Throughout their relationship, Emily sent Higginson 90 poems; he published none of them. (So the answer was “yes” -- yes, he was too deeply occupied.)



Fascicles

Emily Dickinson “did engage in a private kind of self-publication from about 1858 to 1864. During those years, she made copies of more than eight hundred of her poems, gathered them into forty groups, and bound each of these gatherings together with string to form booklets.”

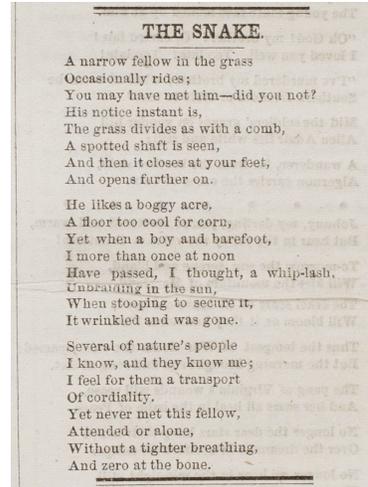
- from the introduction to *Emily Dickinson's Fascicles: Method and Meaning*.
- Photo: A reproduction of a fascicle. Courtesy Emily Dickinson Museum, Amherst, MA.



The Snake

"A narrow Fellow in the Grass" 1866

- First published in Springfield Daily Republican, with the added title of "The Snake."
- Susan surprised Emily with the publication (she wrote to Emily) "Has girl read Republican?" for Valentines Day, 1866. (The rest of Emily's 11 newspaper publications are listed in The Emily Dickinson Literary Timeline, included in the first press packet.)
- Emily deluged Samuel Bowles, the editor of the Springfield Republican, with poems in the early 1860's.
- When the literary post at the Springfield Republican was taken over in 1880 by Mariah Whitney, a cousin of Mrs. Bowles, she never published Emily's work, although she had been an intimate correspondent of Emily's.
- It is believed that Mariah Whitney is the female scholar famously referred to by Emily as having "the facts but not the phosphorence' of books."

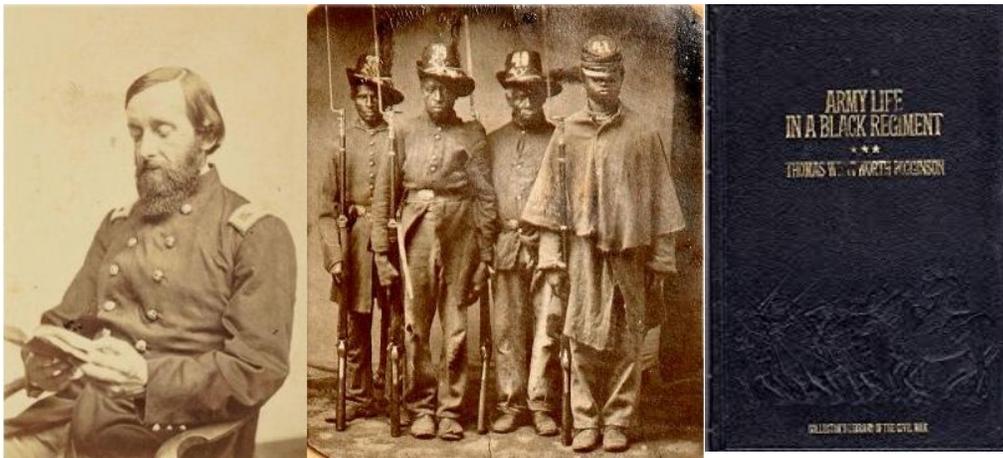


ARMY LIFE IN A BLACK REGIMENT

By Thomas Wentworth Higginson

PUBLISHED 1870

A literary editor and publisher, and an outspoken member of the abolitionist movement, Higginson became the colonel of the Civil War's First South Carolina Volunteers-- the first ever regiment of emancipated slaves, and the first black troops in the Civil War. This book was about his experience and included his transcriptions of the songs his troops sang while marching, making the book into the first, most comprehensive musical ethnography of that era.

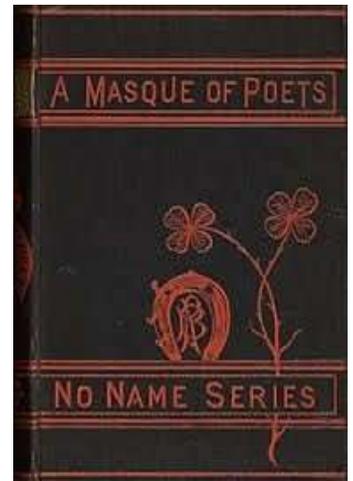


A Masque of Poets

Boston: Roberts Bros. 1878

- A collection of poems published anonymously
- People thought that Emily's poem, "Success is counted sweetest," had been written by Emerson
- Only known Emily Dickinson poem to be published in a book

Following the publication, Emily sent Thomas Niles at the Roberts Brothers Publishing another poem following an overture from Helen Hunt Jackson, but Thomas Niles did not respond. Emily wrote to him again with another approach, asking him about the forthcoming book about George Eliot, and later sent him two more poems. She then followed up sending Thomas Niles the same gift she had sent her first editor, Samuel Bowles, a rare first edition of the Bronte sisters *Poems* (1846). He asked for more poems, she sent some more of her work. His response was non-committal, he enjoyed her work but "did not consume it." (Thomas Niles later published the first book of Emily's poems in the vanity press agreement with Lavinia Dickinson).



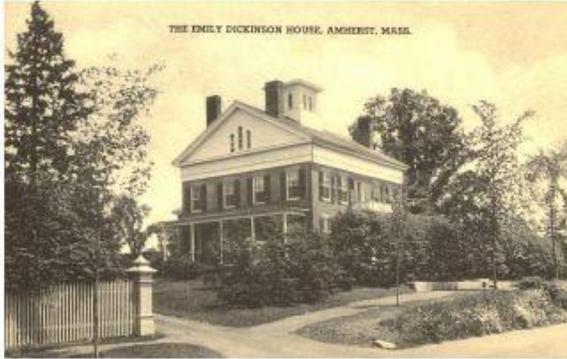
“WILD NIGHTS WITH EMILY” & THE SPINSTER MYTH

“I love you as dearly, Susie, as when love first began, on the step at the front door, and under the Evergreens...”

– Letter from Emily Dickinson to Susan Gilbert

THE HOMESTEAD

(Emily & Lavinia Dickinson’s Home)



THE EVERGREENS

(Susan & Austin Dickinson’s Home)

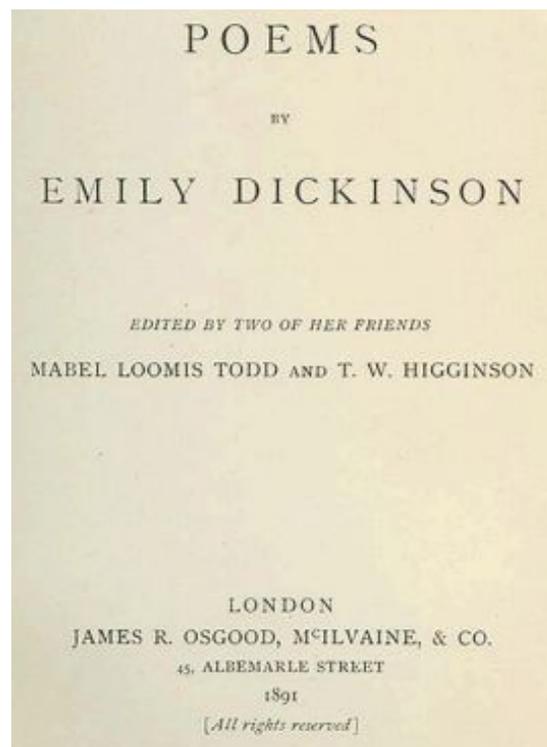


The Dickinson family lived in Amherst in a house they referred to as “The Homestead.” After Austin married Susan Gilbert – who hid her engagement to Austin from Emily for close to a year – they built a house next door and Susan named it “The Evergreens.” Living next door made Emily and Susan’s relationship sustainable, at a time when it was impossible by law for women – who were not able to own anything or control their finances – to set themselves up independently. They sent many letters back and forth to each other every day, in between their stolen visits. They often met to share cups of coffee and new writing in the “Northwest passage,” a pantry in the Dickinson house that had doors on each side, so they could leave if someone was coming in either direction. Susan’s children were also very close to Emily and delivered many of the letters between their mother and their aunt. In 1914, Mattie Dickinson, Susan’s eldest daughter, tried to bring the story of Susan and Emily’s romantic relationship to the world, but it could not hold the public attention the way that Mabel’s tale of a house-bound recluse, writing to heal a “love-disaster” could. After Mabel grew too old to lecture, Mabel’s daughter Millicent – briefly pictured in the movie – took the baton and continued telling the story of Emily Dickinson from Mabel’s point of view. Eventually, Millicent would negotiate with a scholar who wished to have access to Emily’s papers – passed to Millicent by her mother – in exchange for a book favorable to Mabel and negative of Susan. The book, “The Life Emily Dickinson,” by Richard Sewall, was the winner of the National Book Award and it included as an appendix Mabel’s own trashy tell-all entitled “Scurrilous But True.” Sewall’s biography – which cemented many of the reclusive spinster images of Emily Dickinson – did not include the very important information that in fact Emily never came out of her

room when Mabel was in the house because Mabel was having sex with Emily's brother downstairs. Years later, Mattie Dickinson would publish a book entitled "Emily Dickinson Face to Face" to emphasize the contact that Mattie had with Emily and that Mabel did not. Yet Mabel's version of Emily was always privileged over Mattie's, because an image of the poet as victim was too compelling for the public to resist.

GETTING INTO PRINT

Mabel Loomis Todd and Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson collaborated as editors of Emily Dickinson's work – but were far from being true friends of Emily's. T.W. Higginson rejected Emily's poetry during her lifetime, though many of the poems that she had sent him were the ones that became so popular after her death. Higginson was regarded as a radical figure, and in fact was the colonel of the first all-black union troops in the civil war. A self-styled advocate of female suffrage, he chose to champion Helen Hunt Jackson, another woman poet from Amherst who grew up at the same time as Emily – and who wrote poems with dainty rhyme schemes and traditionally female subject matter. Higginson made Helen Hunt Jackson the most famous female poet in America. Although Mabel would refer to Higginson as Emily's "Preceptor" in an attempt to diminish Susan's influence, Emily did not incorporate a single suggestion that Higginson had given her on her poems. In the end, after Emily's death, Higginson admitted that he had taught Emily "nothing."



Emily Dickinson Literary Timeline (*events not directly about Emily/family in italics*)

April 16, 1829	William Austin Dickinson born
December 10, 1830	Emily Elizabeth Dickinson born
December 19, 1830	Susan Huntington Gilbert born
February 28, 1833	Lavinia Norcross Dickinson born
September 1847	Emily enrolls at Mount Holyoke
August 1848	Emily leaves Mount Holyoke
1849-1850	Emily meets Susan Gilbert
Autumn/Winter 1850	Emily sends Susan what is believed to be first letter
February 1850	“Magnum bonum, harem scarum” A valentine letter published in Amherst College Indicator
Spring 1850	Susan-Austin courtship begins
<i>December 1850</i>	<i>Hawthorne’s The Scarlet Letter published</i>
September 1851	Susan goes to Baltimore to teach at Robert Archer’s school
July 1852	Susan returns from Baltimore
<i>1852</i>	<i>Uncle Tom’s Cabin published</i>
February 20, 1852	“ ‘Sic transit gloria mundi,’ ” Published in <i>Springfield Daily Republican</i> , titled “ <i>A Valentine</i> ”
March 23, 1853	Susan and Austin get engaged
April 1854	Family goes to Washington, DC; Emily and Susan left alone at Homestead with cousin John Graves
Fall 1854	Susan goes West to stay with her brother in Grand Haven, Michigan
<i>1855</i>	<i>Whitman’s Leaves of Grass published</i>
November 1855	Emily and family move back into the renovated Homestead
July 1, 1856	Susan and Austin get married in Geneva, NY; Emily is not in attendance; after, they move into the Evergreens next door
Late 1850s	Emily sends Susan many poems

1857 Ralph Waldo Emerson stays at Susan's house with Wendell Phillips; at a later date, Harriet Beecher Stowe visited as well

1858 Emily writes the first of the "Master Letters"

August 2, 1858 "Nobody knows this little rose - "
 First published *Springfield Daily Republican*, titled "To Mrs -, with a Rose."

1859 *Darwin's Origin of Species* published

1861 Second Master Letter written

April 12, 1861 *Civil War* begins at Fort Sumter, SC

May 4, 1861 "I taste a liquor never brewed- "
 First published *Springfield Daily Republican*, titled "The May-Wine"

June 19, 1861 Susan and Austin have first child, Edward (Ned)

Early 1862 Third Master Letter written

March 1, 1862 "Safe in their Alabaster Chambers - "
 First published in *Springfield Daily Republican*, titled "The Sleeping"

April 1862 *Atlantic Monthly* prints Thomas Wentworth Higginson's "Letter to a Young Contributor"
 Emily responds with two letters and seven poems to Higginson

December 4, 1862 Higginson becomes colonel of first all-black regiment

February 29, 1864 "Blazing in Gold, and quenching in Purple"
 First published in *Drum Beat*, Brooklyn, NY, titled "Sunset"

March 2, 1864 "Flowers-Well- if anybody"
 First published in *Drum Beat*, Brooklyn, NY, titled "Flowers"

March 11, 1864 "These are the days when Birds come back- "
 First published in *Drum Beat*, Brooklyn, NY, titled "October"

March 12, 1864 "Some keep the Sabbath going to Church- "
 First published in *Round Table*, New York, titled "My Sabbath"

April 27, 1864 "Success is counted sweetest"
 First published in *Brooklyn Daily Union*, untitled

May 1864 Austin avoids being drafted by paying \$500

April 9, 1865 *Civil War* ends at Appomattox Courthouse

February 14, 1866	"A narrow Fellow in the Grass" First published in <i>Springfield Daily Republican</i> , titled "The Snake"
November 29, 1866	Susan and Austin have second child, Martha (Mattie)
August 1870	Higginson meets Emily at her house
1871-72	<i>George Eliot's Middlemarch</i> published serially
June 16, 1874	Emily's father dies
June 15, 1875	Emily's mother suffers from a stroke and becomes paralyzed
August 1, 1875	Susan and Austin have third child, Thomas Gilbert
Christmas 1876	Susan gives Emily <i>Of the Imitation of Christ</i> , Thomas à Kempis
November 1878	<i>A Masque of Poets</i> runs Emily's poem "Success is counted sweetest"
December 1878	"Success is counted sweetest" credited to Emerson by reviewers ("Reviewers thought it by Emerson," <i>Lives Like Loaded Guns</i> 208; "attributed to Emerson" from timeline, <i>The Life of Emily Dickinson</i> xxvi)
Christmas 1880	Susan gives Emily Disraeli's <i>Endymion</i>
August 1881	Mabel Todd arrives in Amherst
February 1882	Susan shows Emily's poetry to Mabel Todd
September 1882	Mabel and Austin begin their affair
October 5, 1883	Thomas Gilbert dies at age 8; Emily and Susan's seclusion starts
May 15, 1886	Emily dies; Susan washes Emily's body and prepares it for burial
1888	Mabel begins editing Emily's poetry
November 1890	Mabel Todd and Higginson put together first collection of Emily's poetry
November 1891	Second book of poems edited by Mabel and Higginson is published
November 1894	<i>Letters of Emily Dickinson</i> , edited by Mabel, is published
August 16, 1895	Austin dies
September 1896	Third book of poems, edited by Mabel, is published
March 1898	Dickinson v. Todd lawsuit over land in Austin's estate; Mabel countersues for slander
May 1898	Ned dies
August 31, 1899	Lavinia dies

- May 12, 1913 Susan dies
- 1914 *The Single Hound*, edited by Susan's daughter Martha, with an introduction where she debunks the myths about ED is published, she describes "The Romantic Friendship" between her mother and her Aunt Emily, and dedicates the volume to the love of these dear women.
- 1917 David Peck Todd, Mabel's husband, is forcibly retired before tenure ends at Amherst because of mental illness
- 1922 David Todd's family institutionalizes him
- 1932 *Emily Dickinson Face to Face*, by Martha—with the title emphasizing that Mabel had never actually seen Emily, is published
- October 1932 Mabel dies
- 1951 *The Riddle of Emily Dickinson*, by Rebecca Patterson, reveals Emily's love affair with Kate Anthon. At the height of the Red Scare when homosexuality was equated with communism, such a revelation could cause a writer's work to be blacklisted in American schools. Mabel's daughter Millicent declares this book could destroy her mother's life's work.
- 1974 *The Life of Emily Dickinson*, by Richard B. Sewall, is published. Winner of the National Book Award. Sewall negotiated access to Mabel's papers with Millicent Todd Bingham (Mabel's daughter), in exchange for writing this book that would present Emily and Susan's friendship as limited to their teenage years. This book cements Mabel's narrative of the Dickinson myth, portraying Dickinson as a loveless recluse talking to people through walls. As recently as 2008, *The New Yorker* called it "the definitive critically unsurpassed biography" of Dickinson.